

REMARKS

By Office Action dated July 9, 2004, pending claims 1 and 3-25 stand rejected and claim 2 stands objected to, reconsideration of which is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and following remarks. Claims 1 and 6 have been amended. Claims 2 and 10 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 3-9 and 11-25 are now pending.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for noting the allowability of the subject matter of pending claim 2. In view of the Examiner's comments, Applicants have (1) amended claim 1 to incorporate all the limitations of claim 2, and (2) cancelled claim 2. Accordingly, Applicants submit that pending independent claim 1, and corresponding dependent claims 3-9 and 11-25, are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 10

Claim 10 stands rejected for the reasons set forth under items 1 and 2 on page 2 of the Office Action. In order to expedite allowance of claims 1, 3-9 and 11-25, Applicants have cancelled claim 10 without prejudice to the filing of any divisional, continuation, or continuation-in-part application. Accordingly, Applicants submit that these grounds of rejection have been obviated.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1 and 3-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Hilpert (EP 263948) in view of the abstract of the Berggren paper and Fowlkes (U.S. Patent No. 5,935,823), Kay (U.S. Patent No. 5,498,538), Lopez (U.S. Patent No. 5,972,656) or Wylie (U.S. Patent No. 6,111,079) for the reasons set forth on pages 2-5 of the Office Action. In addition, claims 1 and 3-25 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hilpert in view of Steinberg (1995, newly cited and applied), Duan (1995, newly cited and applied) and Fowlkes, Kay, Lopez or Wylie for the reasons set forth on pages 5-7 of the Office Action.

As noted above, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of previously pending claim 2, the subject matter of which was found allowable by the

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Examiner. As the remaining claims depend from independent claim 1, and also because they include additional limitations, such claims are likewise allowable. Accordingly, Applicants request that these grounds of rejection be withdrawn.

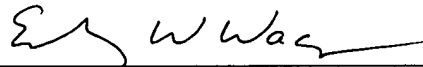
As a final matter, Applicants note that the foregoing amendments are not, and should not be construed as, an acquiescence to these rejections. Rather, Applicants merely wish to expedite the allowance of a more specific embodiment, and reserve the right to continue prosecution of the cancelled subject matter is one or more related applications.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, allowance of claims 1, 3-9 and 11-25 is respectfully requested. A good faith effort has been made to place this application in condition for allowance. However, should any further issue require attention prior to allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at (206) 622-4900 to resolve the same. Furthermore, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees due by way of this Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 19-1090.

Respectfully submitted,

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